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INFO RUEHTH/AMEMBASSY ATHENS 7325
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RUEHBS/AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS 5363
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SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT

MONDAY, JULY 31, 2006

In Today's Papers

Deadly Israeli Attack on Qana Sparks Fury

All papers report that Israel conducted an air strike on Qana over the weekend killing 60 civilians including 37 children. Most papers described the bombing as a massacre. Israeli missiles hit a three-story building where many people were taking refuge in the basement. Hours after the Israeli planes flattened houses in Qana, believed to be the location of Hezbollah headquarters, Lebanese Prime Minister Fuad Siniora vetoed a visit to Lebanon by Secretary Rice saying "Lebanon would be open only to discussing an immediate and unconditional cease-fire." The attack drew immediate global condemnation. The Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs strongly denounced the attack. Secretary Rice made one of her strongest statements saying "We want a ceasefire as soon as possible." But, Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert said Israel would not rush into a ceasefire until it achieves its goals of eradicating Hezbollah. Meanwhile, in Beirut, some 500 protesters angry over the air strike on Qana, broke into the main UN building in the Lebanese capital burning UN and American flags.

Commentary on the Middle East

Ardan Zenturk writes in the tabloid Star that in today's world "winning a war means conquering hearts and minds -- even when the cause is justified." Zenturk argues that the US "gained great sympathy throughout the world when it played a leading role to save Bosnians from Serbian oppression," but that the "US today is totally different because of its policies in Iraq and Israel." According to Zenturk, "Israel has already lost the war in people's minds and no further justification can change this conviction."

Washington-based Ali Aslan wrote in the Islamist-intellectual Zaman that the current situation indicates that "the Bush administration did not learn any lessons from past events and did not change its mentality - one of arrogance, disregard for international public opinion and aggression." He continues that given this mentality, an international peacekeeping force for Lebanon "becomes a disturbing

issue," as there will be "no safety and no authority for any kind of force stationed in this area unless a deal is carried out with the Hezbollah-Iran-Syria axis."

Writing in the liberal Radikal, Omer Taspinar calls the "the tragedy in Lebanon" and "the bloodshed in Iraq" a clear "fiasco for the US," adding that "thanks to the Bush administration's policy, the 21st century will belong to the Shiites." Taspinar concludes, "Following the policies adopted in the aftermath of 9/11, the Shiites have started enjoying an enormous influence in a vast geography. If I were an Iranian mullah, I would certainly be very grateful to George Bush."

Semih Idiz, writing in the mainstream Milliyet, argues that "the war is just beginning" for Hezbollah: "Looking at the remarks by Hezbollah leader Nasrallah, it seems Hezbollah does not want a ceasefire right now. There are signs indicating that Hezbollah wants to drag Israel onto Lebanese soil. If that happens, Hezbollah will certainly experience serious losses but those militants are very much ready to sacrifice their lives especially after the scenes of massacre in Lebanon. The Israelis are not ready for heavy losses in a ground operation. Given the facts, there is no reason for Hezbollah to advocate for a ceasefire; the war is just beginning for them."

Turkey Adopts a New Plan for Combating the PKK

Sabah, Radikal: Sabah columnist Asli Aydintasbas in her column in Sunday's Sabah gave details about the new strategy Turkey has adopted for combating the PKK. According to this new strategy Kurdish politicians in Turkey have met Iraqi Kurdish leader Massoud Barzani and Iraqi President Jalal Talabani to convince the Kurdish leaders to pressure the PKK to lay down its arms. As a result,

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Barzani and Talabani have started to pressure PKK to disarm its 2000 militants in Northern Iraq and send these disarmed militants to Turkey. Within this framework, Talabani has indicated that PKK camps in Northern Iraq would be isolated and the organization would have no access to the cities. The Kurdish leaders had offered to resolve the problem through a general amnesty. Turkey rejected this offer but agreed to overlook the return of low-level militants. According to the report, the plan has been discussed and agreed to by the National Security Council, President Sezer, Prime Minister Erdogan and Chief of General Staff General Ozkok.

Turkish Intellectuals Address the Kurdish Issue

Radikal and Milliyet: A group of 38 intellectuals issued a declaration saying that violence and terrorism cannot be ended with arms. The political, economic, legal, cultural and international dimensions of the Kurdish problem should be taken into account while trying to find a solution to the Kurdish issue. Derya Sazak, Elif Safak, Murat Belge, Tarhan Erdem are among the intellectuals who signed the declaration.

Hazelnut Producers Demonstrate against the Government

Cumhuriyet, Radikal, Aksam and others: A rally in the Black Sea city of Ordu to protest low hazelnut prices staged by 100,000 hazelnut producers turned into a violent demonstration against the government. The demonstrators criticized the government, PM Erdogan and his advisor Cuneyd Zapsu who is in the hazelnut business. After the rally the demonstrators closed the Ordu-Samsun highway to traffic for about 8 hours.

TV News:

(NTV, 8.00 A.M.)

Domestic News

- The Supreme Military Council of Turkey (YAS) will convene under Prime Minister Erdogan from August 1-4 to decide on promotions and retirement of high-ranking military personnel.

- US State Department advisor Phil Zelikow paid a visit to Ankara to test the ground for Turkish participation in an international peacekeeping force to be deployed in Lebanon.

- 130 members of Turkey's main Kurdish party DTP have been taken into custody in the southeastern city of Sanliurfa for holding a meeting on behalf of an outlawed terror organization.

- One child has been killed and three others injured when a landmine believed to have been planted by the PKK detonated in the eastern province of Bingol.

International News

- Hassan Nasrallah vowed Hizbullah would continue rocket attacks on central Israeli towns unless Israel halts its bombardment of Lebanon.

- The Organization of the Islamic Conference will convene on August 3 to discuss the situation in Lebanon. Prime Minister Erdogan is expected to join the summit.

- Four US Marines were killed in fighting with insurgents in Anbar province in west Iraq. Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki is expected to make a cabinet reshuffle following an escalation in violence, according to government officials.

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